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Testimony for the

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans of the

Committee on Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

March 27, 2003

2:00 p.m. 1324 Longworth House Office Building

Hearing on H.R. 959 and H.R. 984:

Bills to improve the conservation and management of coastal and ocean resources

by authorizing NOAA oceanographic programs

by

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1. Introduction

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify at this important hearing. I am D. James Baker, President and Chief Executive Officer at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. I am pleased to have served as Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and as the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) from 1993 to 2001. I am also serving as the Chair of the international Steering Committee for the Global Ocean Observing System sponsored by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Program, and the International Council for Science. I believe that it is very important for NOAA to have an Organic Act, and I am pleased to testify in favor of House Resolutions 984 and 959 which provide the necessary legislation. The Congress has always strongly supported NOAA, and I hope that this resolution will also pass, because it will provide strength to the vital programs NOAA carries out.

From weather and climate to fisheries and coastal zone management, NOAA has had an important impact on the conduct of national and world affairs since it was formed in 1970. During my tenure, I was pleased to see Congress support these critical missions and increase the budget substantially. Today NOAA leads in civil satellite operations, in ocean exploration, and in coastal conservation among other issues. Yet at critical times in these and other national policy debates there have been questions about NOAA's mission and authority especially where NOAA's programs appeared to overlap that of other agencies. An organic act would help avoid these unnecessary debates and allow NOAA to carry out its mission. I would like to divide my testimony into three parts: (1) the importance of NOAA nationally in ocean exploration, (2) the role of

NOAA in coastal and global ocean observations, and (3) the need for NOAA to make its case to the public.

1. Ocean Exploration

I like what has been written here about ocean exploration, and believe that it encompasses well the national mission and role of NOAA. I agree with the Congress that a strong ocean exploration program is critical for the country. Thanks to Congressional support, NOAA has taken the lead in ocean exploration in the United States, and real progress is being made. As you know, the National Research Council has been charged by Congress with assessing the feasibility and value of implementing a major, coordinated, international program of ocean exploration and discovery. I am convinced that NOAA will play a critical role in implementing whatever program is recommended and finally funded.

2. Ocean Observing Systems

In terms of ocean observing systems, I was pleased to see the emphasis on both coastal and global observing systems. From my point of view as Chair of the International GOOS Steering Committee, I can say that NOAA's leadership in coastal and global observations is critical to success for understanding, predicting, and using ocean data for a variety of purposes. Under the leadership of Dr. Worth Nowlin at Texas A&M University, an international GOOS strategic plan has been developed and is being implemented with strong U.S. support through the multi-agency Ocean.US office, ably headed by Dr. Eric Lindstrom. I want also to emphasize the leadership of Dr. Tom Malone of the University of Maryland who has been instrumental in putting together the Coastal Ocean Observations Program, which will need strong support at the upcoming IOC meeting.

I was pleased to see a specific mention of ARGO floats. As you know, Mr. Chairman, while I was head of NOAA I worked with you and your colleagues to develop a comprehensive ocean observing system with ARGO floats as a key component. Today, the ARGO program is being supported by the U.S. and 15 other countries around the world, and observations are routinely available. I understand that more than 20 percent of the total proposed global array is operating, and that funding is coming at a rate almost sufficient to complete the global array of 3000 floats in a few years. I especially commend the new Administrator and Under Secretary, Admiral Lautenbacher, and Dr. Stan Wilson, who have continued to support and develop the program.

Let me say also that as we look to the future, it will be critical to have other ocean observations – namely the satellites that measure the shape of the ocean, altimeter satellites such as the multinational JASON-2 program, tropical moored buoys such as the TOGA-TAO array and coastal moorings, sea level gauges, surface drifting buoys, and measurements from ships of opportunity. Such observations, coupled with data management, are critical for dealing with both coastal and global issues.

3. Legislation

Let me say a word about the details of the legislation in H.R. 984. From my experience I would suggest that it be made clear that the Under Secretary report directly to the Secretary with no intermediary – this is critical for functioning of the agency. I noticed that the Assistant Administrators are to be appointed by the Secretary – I would suggest that this be done with the advice of the Under Secretary. Finally, I was pleased to see the strong support provided to the Science Advisory Board. This has been a critical element for NOAA as it reaches out to a broader community. I established the first such Board, and with the able and excellent leadership of Dr. Alfred Beeton, it was able to provide very good guidance for a variety of programs. I am glad to see that it will continue.

4. Public programs

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 959 speaks strongly about the need to achieve a heightened scientific literacy and public appreciation of the oceans, and the need for NOAA to conduct public education and outreach activities that improve the public understanding of ocean science, resources, and processes. I believe that this can best be done in collaboration with existing institutions. At the Academy of Natural Sciences, we carry out environmental research on a national scale as well as in Pennsylvania and on Chesapeake Bay. We carry out research in systematic and evolutionary biology, we care for major collections, and we operate a major public museum. Our laboratories work closely with NOAA on a variety of issues and we depend, as does the general public, on a healthy federal research structure as exemplified by NOAA. In Maryland our Estuarine Research Center works closely with NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office, with the University of Maryland, and

with other local and regional institutions. We believe that by working together, we can find a way to bring our strengths to bear on the important issues that you have shown leadership on for such a long time.

We also hope that we can find ways to develop new public programs both in Maryland and in Philadelphia to build the scientific literacy that is highlighted in the bill, and we look forward to working with NOAA to improve the public understanding of oceans and their resources to show our many audiences the importance of this work. We want to re-invent our natural history museum to show the excitement and commitment of this important research. I'm looking for ideas for exhibits and programs, and will be talking to you, your colleagues, and your staff about what might be done.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I appreciate the opportunity to testify, and look forward to successful passage of the legislation.